

Tablets contained here. The original letters to Him have not been found.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote to at least three individuals residing in Kansas City, Missouri; there may be more, but these are the ones that have been found to date. The three are Mrs. Carrie C. Haines, Mrs. H. Brecklin and Mary Hanford Ford. The texts of five Tablets have been found that were written to these three women. The first two women received one Tablet each and copies have been found in the International Bahá’í Archives at the Bahá’í World Center in Haifa, Israel. No formal translation has been made of these Tablets, the translations here are merely provisional and temporary. Three additional Tablets have been found that were sent to Ford and they are kept in the U.S. National Bahá’í Archives, handwritten copies of the translation were obtained for this booklet.

The first two Tablets we will address were written to Mrs. Carrie C. Haines and Mrs. H. Brecklin. Both recipients lived on the same block of Warwick Blvd so they knew each other: Mrs. Brecklin at 4111, Carrie Haines at 4117, just one house between them. No dates are on these Tablets so they could have been written any time in the first two decades of the twentieth century. It is likely that they sent their letters together to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as was customary at the time and received the replies at the same time. More investigation will be required.

It is known that “Mrs. H. Brecklin” of 4117 Warwick was Mrs Hugo Brecklein of the same address. Hugo Brecklein was a prosperous druggist in Kansas City for many decades. By 1895 he was in business with A. M. Chadwick running a drugstore at 904 Grand Ave. By 1902 he was operating the store by himself and lived at 313 W 11th St. A dozen years later he owned two drug stores, the main one in the new Rialto building on Grand Ave and the other with Glazier Williams at 904-906 Walnut. The Rialto store had two phone lines with separate phone numbers (Main 7622 and 7623) while the Walnut store had only one (Main 269). By this time the family lived at 4111 Warwick. Both stores operated during the years of the Great War.

This information in the city directories remained the same through the 1921 edition (with the addition, in 1920, of a separate directory entry for “Joseph Brecklein” at the family home address). Something happened between the time when information was gathered for the 1921 and 1922 directories. There is no listing at all for the family in the latter, no drug stores, and two new people are living at the family home address: “Mary A. Gibbs and Mary R. Ellis.” No further information has been found about the Breckleins or why they suddenly moved away, except for the Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

In the Tablet, sent through ‘Alí-Kuli Khán who served as a relay and translator of Tablets, He says:

“Your short letter was long because it came from the depths of your love. One word expressing the love of God is the same as an elaborate and eloquent book, and one song of the praise and sanctification of God is a unique symphony. Therefore from your letter sweet melodies reached the ears of the concourse on

high. Try to find in each day a new grace, riches or blessing and a new gift or talent. Upon you be the glory of glories.”

[Provisional translation provided by Ahdieh Khoshsabegheh of Lawrence, Kansas]

Carrie Haines was the wife of Adelbert S. Haines. In 1895 he owned and operated “A. S. Haines & Son,” and the family lived at 514 E 9th St. In 1902 the business was located at 112 W 4th St, the residence remained the same.

By 1914 there was no listing for the business in the city directory, he had likely retired, and the family had moved to 4117 Warwick, the second house down from Breckleins. They were close neighbors.

There is no change in the city directory listings until 1922 when “Carrie C. Haines” is listed as the widow of “A. S. Haines,” but still at the same address. Records of the Elmwood Cemetery show that Adelbert Haines had died on 13 October 1921 and was buried two days later in Lot 20. He was seventy-seven years old when he died. His wife, Carrie, is not buried in that cemetery. Three others named Haines are buried in the same lot, two of them were born at such times that they could have been their children. No other information about Carrie Haines, or her connection with the Bahá’í community is known, except for her Tablet.

Her Tablet was also sent through ‘Alí-Kuli Khán. The first part of the Tablet acknowledges news of her son’s addiction to alcohol. This saddened the heart of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and He asks God to save the young man from the dangers of his addiction. He considers it is a tragedy that the addiction occurred at such a young age. If the son can overcome the addiction, he will become spiritual and successful. In closing, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá assures her that He is always praying:

“God, please keep your servants from wine and alcohol and keep alcoholic liquor away from them. O God, please destroy this harmful substance from the earth so no sign of it can be seen, and no one will hear any more about it. Thou art the Powerful, the Mighty.

“Upon all women and Bahá’ís be the glory of glories.”

[Provisional translation provided by Ahdieh Khoshsabegheh of Lawrence, Kansas]

The third believer in Kansas City that Abdu’l-Bahá wrote to has made her mark in Bahá’í history. Mrs. Mary H. Ford deserves at least an entire book to herself, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as much as said so. In Haifa, in 1906, He told Florence Khán, “It is true that Mrs. Ford has served humanity long and faithfully. Now tell her, if she will arise to serve the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh with equal zeal and fidelity, her name will be mentioned in all the worlds of God.” This brief mention will be a small beginning toward that destiny.

Mary Hanford Ford was born 1 November 1856 in Meadville, PA, the daughter of a banker. She married Smith M. Ford the owner and editor of “The Evening Mail,” a Kansas City, Missouri newspaper.

During her youth she considered herself an atheist. At her father's deathbed she had an experience that affected a complete transformation of her belief system. Thereafter she was convinced with an unshakable certainty that the human soul survived the end of the human life. She did not ally herself with any specific doctrine or group but considered herself to be a "Spiritist," interested in the nature of the human spirit or soul.

Shortly after her father's death, in her search for a broad base of information on the spirit, she began a course in comparative religion. The ninth lesson was on the Bahá'í Faith. What she learned there interested her so much that the next year, 1902, she attended the "Green Acre School of Religion," in Eliot, ME. The Bahá'í teachers there were Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl, the foremost Bahá'í scholar of the world, and 'Alí-Kuli Khán former Persian Legate to the United States.

She decided she was Bahá'í and dedicated the rest of her life to spreading the Bahá'í message. She eventually traveled and taught in the United States, Italy, Switzerland, France and England. She also promoted the Faith by writing three books: *The Oriental Rose*, *The World of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* and *The Secret of Life*. At her death she was working on a novel highlighting industrial conditions.

She departed this life in Clearwater, FL on 2 February 1937. Her daughter, Lynette Storm, was with her as she traversed the distance between this world and the next. She died saying, "It is so beautiful, Lynette, it is so very beautiful."

Her funeral was held at Wagner Funeral Home in Kansas City on Saturday, 6 February 1937. Notices appeared in the "Kansas City Star" and "Kansas City Times" for the three days up to the funeral. She was buried at Forest Hill Cemetery. Memorial gatherings were held for her in several places including New York City which many prominent people attended.

In a letter of condolence, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith wrote, "Her unique and outstanding gifts enabled her to promote effectively the best interests of the Faith in its new-born and divinely-conceived institutions. I will pray for her soul from the depths of my heart. Her services will always be remembered and extolled." A memoriam was written for her by Florence Khán and published, with her photograph, in *The Bahá'í World*, vol. VII (1936-38).

During her life she received several Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá when she lived and traveled in different places. A letter from the Secretariat at the Bahá'í World Center mentions her receiving a Tablet while she lived in Kansas. So far the text of three Tablets have come to light in the United States National Bahá'í Archives. Two are dated and give the city she lived in when she received them, the texts are included here in their chronological order. The third is not dated nor is a city noted, so it is included last.

The first is dated 1913.

“To Mrs Mary Hanford Ford. Paris

“Upon her be Baha-ollah El Abha!

“He is God!

“O thou heavenly daughter!

“The detailed letter which thou hast written to his honor Mirza Ahmad was perused. This journey which is taken by thee is most acceptable, seasonable and right. The apostles of His Holiness Christ always travelled and raised the Call of the Kingdom of God. Consequently, walk thou in their footsteps. Travel thou to every land and under all circumstances summon the people to the Kingdom of God. All the individuals of humanity are like unto the children. They are occupied with the playthings of earth and their ambition is most inferior. Praise be to God that thou hast a lofty ambition, therefore arise in calling (the people) to the Divine Kingdom. This Call shall envelope the East and the West and continue without interruption throughout the future ages and cycles. It has no cessation. For this reason the wise and far-seeing individuals exalt their ambition and raise the Call of the Kingdom of God.

“Upon thee be Baha-El Abha!

(signed) Abdul Baha Abbas

[translated by M. Ahmad Sohrab Oct 23rd 1913, Ramleh, Egypt]

The second:

“To the maid-servant of God

“Mary Hanford Ford. Kansas City, Missouri.

“Upon her be Baha-ollah El-Abha.

“He is God!”

“O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

“The dispatched letter was received. Praise be unto God that in this springtime of God thou hast grown and thrived like unto a merciful shrub through the outpourings of the cloud of Guidance and hast acquired freshness and delicacy. My hope is that thou mayest become a tree that shall yield abundant fruits, that shall blossom, that shall grow verdant and give forth fresh fruit. Verily this is not difficult in God’s sight.

“In this blessed age, in which the spiritual springtide hath refreshed all regions, many are the trees which although tender and young have acquired enough strength to compete and overshadow hard and mightier ones. Look not at (your) capacity and worthiness, but rather fix your sight upon the supreme bounty of the Kingdom. Although the plant is of tender years yet the effulgences of the Sun is great. Consider this as a manifest and evident fact that the apostles of Christ were like unto the rest of men and outwardly fishermen. They were absolutely devoid of capableness and ability but as the

Bounties of His Holiness Christ were like unto the radiance of the Sun, those frail and feeble souls surpassed the stronger ones and the more resolute.

“It has therefore been made manifest that one should not consider his own capacity but rather should keep in view the Divine Blessings. We hope that the friends of God may exemplify and reflect the Limitless Bounty.

“Concerning the translation of Gobineau’s monograph, the contents of that book are not in conformity with actual facts, for at the time Gobineau was in Persia the Persian government would immediately put to death any person whom it would suspect to be a Babi. A single person among the Babis did not dare to utter even a single word. Thus whatever Gobineau has heard, the source of his information emanates from outside reports and rumors and has not come across the views of important persons. You must have undoubtedly read it and it bears witness to the absolute imaginations of the people of opposition. It is totally devoid of Truth. People who were unaware and related and he had written them down.

“Upon thee be Baha’o’llah El-Abha!

(signed)

[translated by Shoghi Rabbani. January 26th, 1919, Home of Abdul Baha, Haifa, Palestine.]

And the third (in handwriting that is difficult to read in places):

“Mrs Mary Hanford Ford

“He is God

“O ye Herald of the Kingdom of God. Happiness be upon thee for thou hast become free from every fetter and bondage of this transitory world and have become disgusted and away with the world of nature, and have become illumined with the greatest list of guidance. You travelled through out the cities and in assemblies and congregations you raised the call of the Divine kingdom. This was because of the confirmation of God and his unlimited bounty. Therefore open your tongue in his praise that all these Divine blessings have come to you and that you have become confirmed in eternal life. Very soon you will witness the results of this glorious service. You dropped pure seeds and they will form harvests, you planted a tree which will yield unlimited fruits.

“Upon thee may be (word unreadable) and praise.”

[no date, location or translator is given]

These Tablets provide a glimpse into the early history of the Bahá’í community of Kansas City, Missouri. A great deal more research is required to complete the picture. Before 1935, when the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Kansas City, Missouri was established, there are no local records. Information in other places is fragmentary. Finding and assembling these pieces is a long and wide ranging task. A complete history of the community will take decades to prepare; this will serve as a beginning.

Information for this booklet came from the International Bahá'í Archives at the Bahá'í World Center in Haifa, Israel, the United States Bahá'í National Archives in Wilmette, IL, the Kansas City, Missouri Public Library and Heart of America Genealogical Society in Kansas City, Missouri. To all of them I give my heartfelt thanks.

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